

# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Warren Truss MP**

**Minister for Transport and Regional Services**



**09 January 2006  
003WT/2006**

## **NEW OFFSHORE TUG TO BOOST ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND TORRES STRAIT**

Australian Government Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Warren Truss, today announced a \$137 million, eight-year contract for a powerful new ocean-going vessel to be permanently located in the northern Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait area.

Mr Truss said the Cairns-based vessel will be used primarily for emergency towage of ships as well as for overall maintenance and construction services for Australia's national marine aids to the navigation network.

"A permanent emergency towage vessel is a great boost to environmental protection measures in this highly-sensitive region. There are currently no port-based tugs capable of emergency towage services in the northern Great Barrier Reef and the Torres Strait.

"The new offshore tug will be available for towage operations in the case of a shipping emergency, greatly reducing the risk of pollution from such an incident. Utilising this tug will avoid a delay of several days before a tug could respond from southern ports."

Mr Truss said that following a competitive tender process, Brisbane-based company, Australian Maritime Systems Limited had been awarded the contract to provide the dedicated emergency towage vessel. The vessel will operate under the direction of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

"Australian Maritime Systems Limited will work with Swire Pacific Offshore in providing the contract services due to commence on 1 July 2006.

"This is the first stage in implementing the Australian Government's National Maritime Emergency Response Arrangements to provide an ocean-going emergency towage capability at strategic locations around the Australian coast by mid-2007," he said.

"The Australian Government is funding these arrangements on a full cost recovery basis from the shipping industry through an increase in the Protection of the Sea Levy, as agreed by the Australian, state and territory transport ministers in November 2005. AMSA is responsible for regulating, monitoring and coordinating the provision of emergency towage services under these arrangements.

"By combining the emergency towage role with the contract for maintenance of the national network of marine aids to navigation for commercial shipping, overall costs to the shipping industry have been kept as low as possible," he said.

In 2001, Australian Maritime Systems Limited won the contract for maintenance and construction services for AMSA's marine aids to navigation network, including lighthouses, lights, beacons, radar and tide gauges.

This latest contract provides for a continuation of these specialised maintenance services for a further eight-year term, along with the operation of the emergency towage vessel. The vessel is currently under construction in Malaysia. It has a large rear deck for transporting equipment and supplies for aids to navigation maintenance and construction work. It is particularly suited to emergency towage with a bollard pull of 85 tonnes and will carry crucial oil pollution response equipment at all times. The vessel will be flagged in Australia and crewed by Australians.

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